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INDIAN PROBLEMS

NO. II

India's Scientific Frontier

WHERE IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

28954

BY

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

BENGAL STAFF CORPS (RETIRED)
LATE COMMANDING AT DELHI
AUTHOR OF "CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?"

SKELETON MAP SHOWING FRONTIERS OF 1876 AND 1895 AT END OF BOOK

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Westminster
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1895

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"If the course of events should ever bring us to a struggle with the Northern Power on our Indian Frontier, the winning side will be the one which refrains from entangling itself in the barren mountains which now separate the two Empires"

Sir John Lawrence

"Why advance beyond the mountains forming our present strong frontier, and make the difficult accessory zones in advance the principal field of operations, thereby complicating our strategic difficulties and doubling the extent of our theatre of operations?"

Sir Peter Lumsden

"Let but things go against the occupying army for a few weeks, or even days, and the whole country would be up and swarming like a hive of bees round the perplexed detachments of the invader"

Sir Reynell Taylor

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INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER

WHERE IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

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PREFACE

IN publishing the second of my Indian Problem Tracts, I think I may congratulate myself on the weakness of the criticisms to which its predecessor has been subjected. I will take one typical instance, and ask my readers to believe me when I say that every attempt that has been made to impugn the accuracy of my facts and figures and the correctness of the conclusions which I have drawn from them, is as hollow and misleading as the one which I am now about to expose.

In an article on "Can Russia Invade India?" which appeared on the 18th of June, the *Pall Mall Gazette* accused me of grossly exaggerating the transport difficulties against which a Russian invasion of India would have to struggle, and triumphantly cut down the 2,000,000 mules which I had shown would be needed to carry the supplies of an army

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of 150,000 men from Kandahar to Multan, to one fourth that number. But how was this reduction accomplished? Why, by taking as the basis of comparison, not the facts of Sir John Keane's march from Sukkar to Kandahar, but those of Sir Frederick Roberts' march from Kabul to Kandahar. Now the latter march was made under conditions exceptionally favourable, even as regards that particular route, and such as never have or ever can occur in the Bolan road. The column, consisting of 9,987 men of all ranks, had with it no wheeled carriage, only mountain guns; no pontoon train, no sappers, and only a small reserve of engineers' equipments, and hardly any quarter-master's stores, these latter being forwarded from Sibi to the troops at Kandahar. Moving at the best season of the year through a country whose military strength had been completely broken by Sir Donald Stewart—that country the granary of Afghanistan—it not only suffered no delays from vicissitudes of climate or the attacks of the inhabitants, but was able to depend entirely upon the fields of half-ripened corn which bordered the road for fodder for the cavalry horses and transport animals, and so largely upon the villages near

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which they passed for its own food and the food of its camp-followers, that it only took with it five days' supply of bread-stuffs of all kinds.

Now, does the *Pall Mall Gazette* really believe that an advance upon British India can be conducted in such light marching order? And whether it does or does not believe this, am I not justified in preferring my own method of comparing like with like, and of carefully enquiring into all the conditions under which any given military movement has been, or will have to be, carried out, to my critic's plan of comparing like with unlike, and neglecting to ascertain, or, if ascertained, neglecting to mention, the conditions which constitute the unlikeness?

H. B. HANNA

55 PARLIAMENT STREET
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August 1 1895

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INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER

WHERE IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

CHAPTER I

VOICES FROM THE PAST—FOR AND AGAINST

THERE is a great deal in a word which catches men's ear, and saves them the trouble of thinking out a difficult subject, by appearing to settle the question which, in reality, it only begs.

When Lord Beaconsfield tacked the epithet "scientific" to the frontier which his Government was busy bestowing upon India, he had done much to convert the English nation to the belief that that frontier was vastly superior to the one which had preceded it. A scientific frontier must promise greater security against attack than an unscientific one — that was clear to the meanest

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understanding; and men whose understanding was not mean, rested in this phrase, and forbore to ask themselves what constituted a "scientific frontier," or to test the claim of the particular frontier in question, to arrogate to itself that term.

Now, scientific conceptions are, above all things, fixed and definite, the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow; can this be said of the frontier which India owed to Lord Lytton, or of that for which she has since had to thank Lord Roberts? Has not the "scientific frontier" of the past been in a constant state of flux; and with all our delimitation commissions, all our boundary agreements, is there any prospect that the frontier of the future will prove more stable? To enable my readers to answer these questions for themselves, I must lay before them an account of the changes which the scientific frontier has undergone, both in actual fact, and in the minds of its supporters, who, though agreeing to seek it beyond India's natural defences, have differed widely as to the line at which it should be drawn; but as that agreement points to some common principle underlying the varying forms in which the "forward policy"

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has shown, and is still showing itself, it will be necessary first to ascertain what that principle really is.

It may briefly be stated in the words of the late Sir George Colley, written *à propos* of this very north-west frontier question: "Modern military authorities are agreed that the value of an obstacle such as a great river, or a mountain range, depends upon the command, on both sides, of the points of passage, and on the power of operating, at will, on either side of the obstacle. To the combatant who securely holds the passes, it is of incalculable value, enabling him to mask his movements, to concentrate his force in safety, and to strike at will, or to hold his adversary in check while maturing his defence or preparing his counter-stroke. To him who does not command the passes, it is, on the other hand, a barrier which hampers his movements, and a screen which masks and protects his enemy."

The theory of awaiting attack behind a mountain-range, Colley declared to have been shattered, with many others, by Napoleon

In the forms in which Colley's principle had been stated before he undertook the task of teach-

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ing strategy to Lord Lytton, we shall find it condemned again and again by the great men, the story of whose struggle with the "forward policy," prior to the Afghan War, I am now about to narrate; but as *he* laid it down, as a dictum of the great Napoleon's, which no student of modern strategy would dream of disputing, it requires to be met by pointing out three things: the first, that Napoleon had in his mind the mountain passes of Europe, which an army can traverse in a couple of days, and not passes through which it would take the same army weeks to penetrate, and whose length must be always a complete guarantee against anything of the nature of a surprise; the second, that Colley treats the North-West Frontier question as if the Afghan mountains constituted India's sole line of defence, and ignores the broad river and wide waterless desert of which we already held both sides, the combination of which any strategist, either before or since Napoleon, would allow to be a very strong frontier, far stronger, indeed, than the actual frontier of any European State; the third, that whereas in our old position we *did* possess the power of operating at will on either side of the obstacle—in this case the Indus

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or the desert of Beluchistan—in our new position such freedom is exactly what we lack, since our power of moving and reinforcing our troops beyond the Bolan is, at all times, strictly limited by the necessity of bringing them and all their supplies from a very distant base, and the narrow means of transport at their disposal, and is always liable to curtailment and suspension from causes over which we can exercise no control.

To return now from principles to facts:—The Afghan War of 1838–42 was as much the fruit of the "forward policy," as are to-day the expeditions into Waziristan and Chitral, but to that remote incident I will not go back, except to quote Lord Lawrence's remark, made many years later, that he could well recall the general enthusiasm with which the movement on Afghanistan was hailed by the English in India, but that however confident our officers in those days were of the sound policy which led to the expedition, the large majority of those who survived it had since deprecated very strongly an advance into that country, or any very intimate interference in its affairs. That policy took its new departure with the letters addressed to Lord Canning in 1856, on the eve of the Persian

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War, by General John Jacob, the able and successful administrator of the Sind Frontier. The object of those letters was to persuade the newly-installed Viceroy to take advantage of our quarrel with Persia about Herat, to checkmate the Power which he saw behind Persia, pushing her on and ready to profit by her successes, by the immediate occupation of Quetta, "which would thenceforth form the bastion of the front attack, and nothing could, with hope of success, be attempted against us until the salient was disposed of."

Jacob's plans and arguments made so considerable an impression on Lord Canning's mind, that he might have forestalled Lord Lytton in the occupation of Quetta, but for the strenuous opposition of his Military Secretary, that Henry Durand, who, as a young Engineer officer, had blown in the gates of Ghazni, and who had brought back with him out of the perils and humiliations of the first British invasion of Afghanistan, a clear comprehension of the enormous difficulties which must beset any force operating in and through that country, and who was able to convince the Viceroy that an occupation of Quetta, undertaken as a demonstration against Persia, must

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end in an advance upon Kandahar, or even Herat.

Durand's representations carried the day—instead of demonstrating at Quetta, we demonstrated at Bushire, and the event falsified Jacob's prediction that a descent on the coast of Persia would not greatly alarm her Government, and that an attempt on our part to penetrate into the heart of that country, would be met by a rapid advance on our unprotected North-West Frontier, and the establishment of a Persian army in firm and secure possession of Kandahar. Persia was coerced easily and at once, and within a few weeks of her submission Lord Canning had cause to thank Heaven that he had not embarked upon a distant adventure by land, for India was in the throes of the great Mutiny, and John Lawrence was hesitating whether or not to abandon Peshawar and retire behind the Indus. What would Lawrence's position have been if the majority of his British troops had been hundreds of miles away and at that season of the year hopelessly beyond recall? He might have held on to the Punjab, and by his great personal influence kept its people loyal; but, certainly, he could not have carried out

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his bold and masterly scheme for crushing the insurrection by striking at its most vital point; and if Delhi had not fallen when it did, all the rest of India would have been lost, at least, for a time.

And if the situation in India would have been immensely aggravated by the absence of the British troops of the expeditionary force, the position of that force itself would have been a desperate one. We should certainly not yet have had time to realize Jacob's expectation of converting the Afghans into friendly neighbours,[1] and we can judge of what would have been the fidelity of our Beluchi allies by their conduct twenty-three years later after the British disaster at Maiwand, when the tribes fell back at once into their old predatory habits and took to pillaging

[1] "The enjoyment of regular pay by the Khelat people would have great influence on the Afghans generally. All would be anxious to obtain the same advantages. . . . If all distrust of us be removed from the Afghan mind, as it has been removed from the minds of the Government and people of Khelat, the whole country would aid us heart and hand."—Letter of General Jacob to Lord Canning, in Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta, 25th February, 1879.

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transport trains and cutting off stragglers, as naturally as if no General Jacob had ever been able to boast that he had turned them from freebooters into peaceful cultivators and herdsmen.[1]

There was never a time when John Lawrence was not opposed to the policy of advancing our frontiers; never a time when he had faith in Jacob's dream of conciliating the Afghans by dangling before their eyes the benefits which their Beluchi neighbours were reaping from our presence among them, and of gaining their confidence by placing ourselves in a position from which it would be comparatively easy to menace their independence. He always shared the opinion of an eminent soldier of the present day, that "the less the Afghans see of us, the less they will dislike us,"[2] and though it was he who signed both the first and second treaty with Dost Mahomed, he never doubted that the Indian Government would have acted more wisely in abstaining from all

[1] It is true that Sind remained quiet throughout this critical time, but it was held by a purely Hindustani force, over which Jacob had acquired the most complete influence.

[2] Lord Roberts.

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relations with Afghanistan. But the grave danger which he and India had escaped in 1857 confirmed him in those views and gave additional force to the condemnation which, nine years after the rejection of General Jacob's proposals, he pronounced upon a similar scheme emanating from Sir Henry Green,[1] Jacob's successor in Sind, and endorsed by Sir Bartle Frere, then Governor of Bombay.

More cautious than Jacob, Green did not advise a sudden and immediate advance to Quetta, but merely the adoption of measures in Beluchistan and the Bolan which should lead us thither almost imperceptibly, and he justified his anxiety to see that place in British hands by the very argument which Sir George Colley afterwards set forth in words which I have already quoted, viz., that the screen of mountains which separates India from Afghanistan shut us off from all timely knowledge of events occurring in Central Asia, and that it was essential to our safety that we should go beyond it. Like Jacob, Green prophesied evil things if his advice was not accepted and acted on.

[1] Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta.

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But Lawrence had heard both the arguments and the prophecies before, and he was unconvinced by the one and indifferent to the other. In the Minute[1] in which he examined Green's proposals, he stated that he had fully considered Jacob's reasonings at the time of their original publication, had not lost sight of them in the interval, and adhered to the decision deliberately arrived at in Council, that an advance to Quetta was not advisable, though if at any future time a real danger to the Indian Empire were imminent, it would be always open to the British Government to take that step. He further denied that by such an advance the Indian Government would obtain better or quicker information as to Central Asian affairs than already reached it through St. Petersburg and Peshawar, though he was willing to admit that from Herat and the country between Herat and Kandahar more accurate accounts might perhaps be received *viâ* Quetta than through Kabul or Meshed. He repudiated with calm contempt the insinuation that the Government of India was in the habit of shutting its eyes to all that was taking place beyond our border, and

[1] *Ibid.*

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claimed for himself and his Council a perfect acquaintance with the effects which Russia's movements in Central Asia were having upon the minds of the peoples living beyond our frontier, and with the fact that the neighbouring States had long been discussing on which side—British or Russian—they should range themselves; and he gave as his reasons for dissenting from the course which Sir H. Green would have had him adopt in view of the said effects and discussions, his belief that "if the course of events should ever bring us to a struggle with the Northern Power on our Indian frontier, the winning side would be the one which refrained from entangling itself in the barren mountains which now separate the two Empires, and that the Afghans themselves, foreseeing this result, were likely, in the end, to throw their weight on the same side."

If the Statesman spoke in this Minute, an exhaustive military judgment was passed upon the policy of Jacob and Green by the Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir William Mansfield, afterwards Lord Sandhurst, whose eminence as a strategist few soldiers are likely to question.[1] Prefacing his

[1] *Ibid.*

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remarks with two extracts from Sir H. Havelock's "War in Afghanistan," descriptive of the country between Sakkar and Dadur, with the nature of which the readers of my former tract are familiar, Sir William Mansfield pointed out that if we assumed the troops then at Jacobabad to be thrown forward to Quetta, we should have the spectacle of a force separated, by such ground as that described by Havelock, from the nearest point on the Indus by a distance of 257 miles, equivalent in time to twenty days, without a halt on the part of an advancing force, incapable of being reinforced or provisioned during the hot season, and in danger, should it be seriously threatened in front, of having the Bolan Pass closed in rear by the predatory tribes whose habits, it was safe to assume, did not differ from those of the generation which gave so much annoyance to Lord Keane. In his—Sir William Mansfield's—opinion, if we were to accede to a military occupation of Quetta, the most ordinary prudence would compel us to double the estimate of troops submitted to Lord Canning by General Jacob, and to include in it at least 3,000 British infantry and artillery, and a regiment of dragoons, for after the bitter experience of the Mutiny, no

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Government would ever dream of holding a distant outpost with Native soldiers only. Such an occupation would be a very costly affair, and considering the defences afforded on our side by the Bolan Pass, by the difficulties of the ground, he thought it very questionable whether the outlay would be worth while, if the Russians were at Kabul and Kandahar, so long as there was peace between Great Britain and Russia; and that even if the worst prognostications of the Russophobists were fulfilled, *he should still be inclined to say that the side whence to defend the Bolan was not the western extremity, but rather the eastern extremity, because there a hostile force could be struck on the head before it could have time to deploy, with the heavy material without which a modern army could not move, against such forces as we should array against it on any field we might choose between Shikarpur and Dadur. The desert would thus be turned into our most useful ally, instead of being a formidable difficulty, as would be the case if General Jacob's plan were adopted.*

Once at Quetta, however, we could not stop there, but must be drawn on and on, till ultimately we should find ourselves occu-

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pying the whole of Afghanistan, and this he supposed to have been General Jacob's real intention. The Commander-in-Chief did not affirm that it was Sir H. Green's also, but he asked whether that officer had ever permitted himself to weigh the consequences of the movement proposed, and the certainty that those consequences would present themselves at once to the Afghan mind, and the minds of Persia, Bokhara, and Russia. That we should be able to creep over the country between Jacobabad and Quetta so insidiously that neither India nor her neighbours should be aware of our proceedings until the whole of our scheme of advance had been accomplished, he deemed impossible ; and he branded the suggestion as dishonouring to British Policy ; whilst he brought the notion that, if Sir H. Green's plans were executed, "Quetta would afford us a post of infallible political observation of Central Asia" to the test of experience, by showing that in the correspondence which passed between Sir Willoughby Cotton at Jellalabad, and Sir William Nott at Kandahar, in 1840, the former admitted that his information with regard to the Russian advance on Khiva came to him by the Outward Mail from Calcutta,

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and the latter replied that *his* knowledge of the same subject was gained by conversing with merchants and horsedealers, on whose accounts not much reliance could, perhaps, be placed. "The like may be seen in the present day," wrote Mansfield in conclusion. "Our real news about Russian doings against Bokhara comes from Europe, and not from the dispatches of our native envoy at Kabul, who, nevertheless, reports all that is known to Afzul Khan and Azim Khan about the Russians."

Both the Statesman's and the Soldier's voice was to be heard in the short Note,[1] in which Sir Henry Durand, then the Military Member of Council, recorded his agreement with the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief. As a soldier, he dwelt on the importance of strengthening our position on the frontier by the completion of what he termed the Indus group of railways, so as to secure the power of operating above or below the passes at our discretion, should the necessity for such action ever arise; as a statesman, he expressed the belief that the possession of such a power would almost remove the chance of ever

[1] *Ibid.*

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having to exert it. As a soldier, he vindicated the superiority of the course adopted by Lord Canning in 1857, over that pressed upon him by General Jacob; as a statesman, he pointed to the falsification of all that officer's prognostications with regard to the events in Afghanistan which were to follow upon the non-occupation of Quetta, as a reason for refusing to sanction a scheme which its author justified on the same assumptions of Afghan weakness to resist Russia, or Afghan willingness to accept her influence or control. As a soldier, he declared his certainty that we could again seize Afghanistan if it were advisable or necessary, and that "with our Indus frontier complete in its communications, parallel and perpendicular, no power on earth could shake us out of that country"; as a statesman, he protested against "precipitating complications, and plunging into certain difficulties, out of respect for nervous apprehensions the realization of which was, if it ever took place, remote, and which could be met, when the time came, whichever way might be most advisable."

No more was heard for some years of the vital importance of Quetta to India, but eight months after

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the rejection of Sir H. Green's proposals, the policy of defending India by pushing forward into Afghanistan raised its head once more, in a Note written by Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Lumsden, Deputy Quarter-Master-General, at the Viceroy's request[1]. Lumsden, a great traveller and linguist, well acquainted with the countries and peoples lying to the north and west of India, agreed with Jacob that the Bolan was the only route by which a Russian army was ever likely to advance against us; yet he strongly condemned the idea of attempting to forestall our great rival in the occupation of Herat, and scoffed at the "disciples of the Jacobean principle," who had "no scruple about locating an outpost 250 miles in advance of its nearest support," "with the Bolan Pass and a desert" between that support and it. In his opinion, "to advance beyond the mountains forming our present strong frontier, and to make the difficult accessory zones in advance the principal field of operations, was to commit the mistake for which Jonini condemned the French Directory when, with fatal result, they invaded Switzerland." And yet the man who saw so clearly the folly of

[1] *Ibid.*

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believing that our "certain and even rule" would be acceptable to the "restless Afghan" for longer than the life-time of the generation which, from personal experience of both, could contrast it with "the anarchy and oppression" which preceded it—this very man wanted the Indian Government to possess itself of the strategical key to Afghanistan, by taking over from the Amir the valleys of Kuram and Khost! With the Peiwar and Shutagardan Passes in our hands, so Lumsden argued, we should master Kabul, and our presence there, in alliance with its government, would give to that government immense moral and physical strength. As Jacob had counted on soon reconciling the Afghans to our presence in a position which threatened Kandahar, by subsidies of money and arms, so Lumsden thought to induce the Amir to welcome our taking up a position whence we could dominate his capital, by relieving him of the trouble of collecting his own revenues in one portion of his dominions, and by promises of support against internal or external foes. Each of these officers was equally convinced that his particular scheme would be a cheap, effectual and final solution of the North-West Frontier Question, and it is hard

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to say which of them presented his proposals in the more moral and philanthropic light. Jacob's assurance that in the arrangements proposed by him "we should act in no respect other than as we might be prepared to justify before all good men in the world, or before the throne of God," being matched by Lumsden's anxiety to make amends to Afghanistan for having been "unjustly invaded by us in her prosperity, by not shrinking from strengthening her in her adversity; by securing for her oppressed subjects the benefits of a strong administration; by acting faithfully in all our dealings, and by showing by example that our Christian precepts were something more than the selfish hankerings of mercantile adventurers."

But Lumsden had to deal with the same man who had been proof against the plausible reasonings of Jacob and Green, and his note simply gave Sir J. Lawrence the opportunity of reasserting[1] his fixed determination to take no steps which could alarm the susceptible jealousy of the Afghans or violate the spirit, if not the letter, of our existing agreements with them, for whether we advance

[1] *Ibid.*

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into Afghanistan as friends or foes, would, in the end, make little difference—the final result would be the same." The Viceroy could not be brought to see the distinctions, moral and political, which the advocates of the Forward Policy drew between their own aims and methods and those of the authors of the Afghan War; the policy was one and the same, and there could be no escaping the evils that flowed from it; neither could he be shaken in his conviction that any advance, whether towards Kandahar or Kabul, would be construed by the Afghans into the forerunner of the occupation of their country, which, indeed, it must prove, since Quetta and Kuram were only valuable in the eyes of those desiring their occupation, as stepping-stones to Herat and Kabul, in the event of a Russian advance. He did not deny that those cities were important strategical positions, but they could not be occupied in the strength that would be necessary, except at an enormous cost of men and money. The soothing doctrine that we could occupy large territories beyond our frontier, inhabited by restless and warlike tribes, with the force which barely sufficed to hold India securely, found no acceptance with him; on the contrary, he

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thought that all, or nearly all, the troops so employed, would have to be added to the then existing army, and that the constitution of this new force, so far as it was Native, must be "a serious matter," as "Afghans in any number would be out of the question," "Goorkhas in excess of the five regiments on the Bengal establishment were not to be had," and "Hindustanis and Sikhs would not like such service."

And for us to advance to meet Russia was to give her so much vantage ground; for we should thereby lessen the distance she would have to march her armies, whilst increasing the interval between our own troops and their true base of operations. Let the Russians, if they had the means and the desire to attack India, which he doubted, undergo the long and tiresome marches which lie between the Oxus and the Indus; let them wend their way through difficult and poor country among a fanatical and courageous population, where, in many places, every inch could be defended; then they would come to the conflict on which the fate of India would depend, toilworn, with an exhausted infantry, a broken-down cavalry, and a defective artillery, and our troops

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would have the option of meeting them wherever the genius of our commanders might dictate.

As to the fear that to allow Russia to occupy the countries adjacent to our western border was to give her the opportunity of stirring up strife and hatred against us among the mountain tribes, Sir John Lawrence pointed out that *her* risks would be greater than *ours*, since the wider the area over which she spread her rule, the greater the danger of insurrection which she herself would run, and the greater the likelihood that the tribes would seek our aid against her. The argument in favour of an advance on our side, drawn from the internal troubles which the extension of Russia's power to our frontier might provoke in India itself, he met with the remark that, whether those troubles occurred or not would depend largely on the Government of the day and the contentment of the people ; that, at the worst, our troops massed along the border, ready to meet the invaders, would have a greater influence on that discontent than the same troops locked up beyond the mountains of Afghanistan, and that should a really formidable insurrection arise in India, the proper action of its rulers would be to recall the army beyond

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the Passes, the fate of which, when retiring, encumbered with women, children and camp followers, might be most melancholy.

"Taking every view, then, of this great question," wrote Sir John Lawrence, in conclusion, "the progress of Russia in Central Asia, the effect it will, in course of time, have on India, the arrangements which we should have to make to meet it, I am firmly of opinion that our proper course is not to advance our troops beyond our present border, nor to send English officers into the different States of Central Asia, but to put our own house in order by giving the people of India the best Government in our power, by conciliating, as far as practicable, all classes, and by consolidating our resources. I am greatly in favour of opening up lines of communication of every kind which, on full consideration, are likely to prove useful, so far as the means will permit; but I strongly deprecate additional taxation to any important extent, and I am greatly averse to increasing our debt on unproductive works."

It is worthy of note that no member of the Council to which Lumsden's paper was submitted took the least notice of that officer's own sugges-

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tion for the placing of our Indian frontier on a perfectly safe footing, but that all addressed themselves to the consideration of the larger proposition which was clearly in Sir H. Green's mind when he wrote his Memorandum advocating the occupation of Quetta, viz., a British advance in force into Afghanistan, with a view to the annexation of that country; which proposition all alike denounced as dangerous, unnecessary and unjust. Taylor, Massey, and Durand contented themselves with recording their complete agreement with the views of the Viceroy, and their desire to see the defects in our frontier communications promptly remedied, and Yule with recommending the adoption of a policy towards Afghanistan which should tend to conciliate the people rather than the princes and chiefs, and suggesting several minor ways in which he thought the confidence of the former could be won; but the Commander-in-Chief handled the whole subject in a Memorandum as long and as weighty as the Viceroy's Minute; and Colonel (now Sir Henry) Norman, the Military Secretary to the Indian Government, was hardly less exhaustive in his treatment of it.

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Both Mansfield and Norman were of opinion that personal objects were at the root of much of the agitation in favour of an aggressive policy in Afghanistan. In the words of the former, "the popular wish in favour of such a policy had sprung, in the first instance, from the hardly disguised ambition of one or two distinguished officers." In the words of the latter, "its real cause was what might be styled, Brevet-Mania, or K.C.B.-Mania rather than Russophobia." Norman predicted that the triumph of such a policy would cost India not less than three and a half millions sterling, and add 30,000 men to the Anglo-Indian army, one-third or one-half that number being British troops. Mansfield adopted these figures, and thought that the larger proportion of British troops would be required. Norman feared that the additional Native force must consist of men drawn from Northern India, of whom we had too many already; Mansfield that it would have to be raised in Afghanistan itself, a dangerous expedient. Norman wrote that a policy which involved an occupation of Afghanistan was "that which would most surely add to all our difficulties, and play into the hands

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of Russia." Mansfield that he could "conceive no greater political mistake than a course which would unite the whole population of Afghanistan in the most active hostility towards us, and which would compel us further to meet that hostility on ground most favourable to those we should contend against, with a great waste of our resources."

The similarity of their views being so great, it will suffice to give here Mansfield's reasons for holding them. The Commander-in-Chief declared that the Frontier Question must be looked at from four points of view—the moral, the political, the administrative, and the military; and from every one of the four he pronounced against any change in the limits of India as then fixed. He protested against applying one set of moral principles "in the West, where we were controlled and affected by the power and diplomacy of other nations, and another in the East, where we happened to be all-powerful." Though civil war was raging in Afghanistan, it was "an unoffending country" in its conduct towards ourselves, and how could English gentlemen, who constantly had justice and truth in their mouths, reconcile a proposal to themselves which

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involved its gratuitous invasion? The force of circumstances, the necessity of self-preservation, the configuration of the Peninsula of Hindustan, had driven us on from our old coast-factories to our present frontier beyond the Indus and the Ganges; but all such causes were now non-existent. Afghanistan presented no danger to British power; there was no force of circumstances impelling us forward as in the case of the Punjab in 1845-46, and again in 1848-49; and the configuration of the country, that was to say of the great chain of mountains, which had been called, and properly so, the natural boundary of India, took away all ground for forgetfulness of the moral principle.

As a statesman Mansfield judged that, putting the case hypothetically of a struggle between Russia and England for Asiatic dominion, that party would enter on the contest with great advantages which had abstained from forestalling events by the invasion and annexation of Afghanistan. Were Russia the invader, Afghanistan would be our best ally, and were we the invaders, our worst enemy. Such an advance on our part would also more than anything else provoke the conflict with Russia, which even if inevitable could hardly,

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under the conditions then existing, take place in less time than a generation, if she entertained all the ambitious designs laid to her charge, and were absolutely successful in giving effect to them. The political results of the forward policy were then a long and deadly war of occupation with the people of Afghanistan, and a great probability of early conflict with Russia.

Looking at that policy from the Indian administrative point of view, Mansfield dwelt upon the folly of incurring an enormous expenditure for the purpose of placing us in a dangerous position towards Afghanistan, in a most doubtful one towards Russia. We had already difficulty enough in meeting India's own wants from India's revenues. The policy of "stretching our demands on the people as little as possible," while we afforded them the means of modern material development, had been attended by great success. The creation of railways and canals, of Imperial and local roads, had raised the price of labour and increased trade, foreign and domestic; "was all this to be abandoned; were the people to be overwhelmed with taxation; the debt to be immeasurably increased; were discontent and disloyalty to

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be spread over the whole land in the furtherance of the chimerical schemes of Jacob and his school of politicians?" It could not be too often repeated that "the occupation of Afghanistan was the stoppage of progress in India."

Lastly, turning to the military considerations which forbade any advance beyond India's natural frontiers, Mansfield laid stress upon the danger of attempting to hold a conquered country with an army largely recruited from its own inhabitants. This might succeed for a time, until domestic insurrection made its appearance, or the intrigues of a Foreign Power began to be felt; but we had seen such an experiment break down, and we could hardly have forgotten how near we had been to extermination only ten years before. Were we prepared to repeat that experiment under far more unfavourable circumstances, in a mountainous country filled with the most warlike tribes, and which, having Persia and Russia to the west and north, was liable to excitement owing to causes from which India, in late years, had been entirely free?

But the whole difficulty of the problem had not yet been stated. Thirty thousand troops might suffice as Afghanistan's peace establishment, but if

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the conflict which we were asked to believe inevitable were really to come, two-thirds of the army of Bengal must be moved from stations where their presence was considered necessary for the peace of India, in support of the army of occupation ; and it might happen that the whole available military resources of Upper India would be separated from India by the mountain defiles of Afghanistan and the breadth of that country, all real communication being put in extreme jeopardy. Our hold of India was not of the nature to allow of this wholesale alienation of our military resources. However much the profound peace which she generally enjoyed, and the admirable docility of her people might make us forget the fact, India was but a recently conquered country, and the commonest prudence forbade us to treat her as if she were England, for the purpose of invading Afghanistan, or of sustaining a great conflict with Russia ; and all her circumstances prescribed that that conflict, if come it must, in future times, could alone be prosecuted by us to a successful conclusion, on our side, of her mountain barriers.

Sir William Mansfield brought his memorandum to a close by expressing his satisfaction at the des-

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patch of a Native Envoy to Kabul, and his hope that he would be instructed to make it known that the British Government was absolutely opposed to the schemes directed against Afghanistan which were ventilated in Indian and English newspapers.

After an interval of only nine months the attention of the British Government was again called to Quetta by Sir Henry Rawlinson,[1] who recommended its occupation on the ground that the erection of a strong fortress at a point which would cover the frontier and, in the event of an invasion, delay an enemy sufficiently to enable us to mass our full forces in the rear, would be likely to have a salutary effect upon the Native mind in India, which was said to be disturbed by our continued inactivity.

The proposal was a thoroughly honest one, hiding no ulterior aims; yet its author was quite alive to the fact that it might be misunderstood by the Afghans, and he showed his sense of the importance to us of retaining their good-will by declaring that "if the tribes in general regarded this erection of a fortress—above the passes, although not on Afghan soil—as a menace, or as a pre-

[1] Memorandum on the Central Asian Question.

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liminary to a further hostile advance, then we should not be justified for so small an object in risking the rupture of our friendly intercourse."

As Sir J. Lawrence and his Council had little difficulty in proving that the Afghans were certain to regard an occupation of Quetta with suspicion and alarm, the proposal found no acceptance with the home authorities.

But a fourth attempt to commit the British Government to the policy of strengthening India by advancing her frontiers, and by bringing Afghanistan under our control, met with a very different reception. Sir Bartle Frere, who as Governor of Bombay had forwarded Green's Memorandum to the Indian Government, backed up by his own approval, had returned to England, and in 1875 was a member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India. In that capacity he submitted to his chief, through the Political Secretary of the Council, Sir John Kaye, a long letter, in which a most alarming picture of Russia's power and aims, and our inability to oppose them, as India was then circumstanced, led up to two recommendations, the one, that we should, at once, take advantage of our treaty agreement with the

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Khan of Khelat to occupy Quetta; the other, that we should depute well-selected English Agents to Herat, Kabul, and Kandahar. As Frere was clear-sighted enough to see that the Amir might object to either step, but more especially to the latter, he very consistently urged upon the Indian Secretary the advisability of clearing for action when taking them, and suggested that concessions which Shere Ali would not grant freely, might be wrung from him by the threat of helping his rebellious son, Yakub Khan, to make himself the Independent Ruler of Herat; or might be obtained from the latter prince, as the price of actually assisting him to dismember the Kingdom, which Indian statesmen had been labouring for many years to strengthen, and which Mansfield had truly described as "an unoffending country with which we were at peace, and had been at peace for a long term of years."

There was the usual talk in this letter about our determination to respect the internal independence of Afghanistan, and to support the Amir actively and efficiently, so long as he maintained friendly relations with us; but if it is just possible to believe that Jacob and Lumsden may have

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persuaded themselves that they meant fairly both by the country and its ruler, the same concession cannot be made to Sir Bartle Frere. He must have known that the demand by which he proposed to test the friendly feelings of Shere Ali towards ourselves, was one which in the opinion of that prince struck at the independence of his government and the security of his throne, one, moreover, which we were pledged not to put forward; and whilst he was prepared to resort to arms to compel its acceptance, he was unwilling to give Shere Ali anything in exchange for his submission, since he warned the Secretary of State "to avoid the mistake of subsidizing the Amir."

It is needless to say that if the man who had approved of Lord Mayo's frankly given promise not to press British agents upon the Afghan Government had been still at the India Office; or if, in the Conservative Administration which had recently succeeded to that of Mr. Gladstone, the Indian Secretaryship had fallen to him who had received and been satisfied by the weighty Minutes on Lumsden's Note, and those no less weighty on Rawlinson's Memorandum, this letter of Sir Bartle Frere's would have remained inoperative; but

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the Duke of Argyll had been replaced, not by Sir Stafford Northcote, but by Lord Salisbury, who at once adopted the views contained in it, and lost no time in instructing the Indian Government to give them effect.

His orders filled the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, and his Council with consternation; and, first fortifying themselves with asking and receiving the concurrence of "all the men most experienced in border matters," they strove earnestly to induce the Indian Secretary to reverse his decision. A little delay was all they succeeded in obtaining; and when, by the resignation of Lord Northbrook in January 1876, Lord Salisbury had the opportunity of appointing a Viceroy to his mind, the policy recommended by General Jacob, Sir H. Green, and Sir Bartle Frere, triumphed over that which had been upheld by four Viceroys—Lord Canning, Lord Lawrence, Lord Mayo, and Lord Northbrook; by two Commanders-in-Chief in India—Sir William Mansfield (afterwards Lord Sandhurst), and Lord Napier of Magdala;[1] by two Military Members of Council—Sir Henry Durand

[1] The latter officer changed his opinions after leaving India, so far as to favour the occupation of Quetta.

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and Sir Henry Norman; by two Lieutenant-Governors of the Punjab—Donald McLeod and R. H. Davies; by one Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces—Sir William Muir; by two Commissioners of Peshawar—Sir R. Pollock and Donald McNabb; by A. Monro, Commissioner of the Derajat Division; by R. Taylor, Commissioner of Umritsur, and by many others hardly less well acquainted with North-West Frontier affairs than the majority of the men whose names I have given above.

Quetta was occupied within six months of Lord Lytton's arrival in Calcutta; but that step, which was at no time likely to embroil us with Afghanistan, however much the Afghans might dislike it, was so overshadowed by the interest attaching to the efforts made to carry out Sir B. Frere's second recommendation, that, beyond contributing its share to the work of impressing Sher Ali with our hostile intentions towards him, it cannot be said to have exercised any influence on the course of events which led swiftly and surely up to the second Afghan War. That war lasted two years, and out of it the Indian Empire emerged in the possession of the Pishin and

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Kuram valleys—the latter of which had proved to offer none of the military and political advantages with which Lumsden had succeeded in investing it in Lord Lytton's eyes—but no nearer the object for which the war had been waged, the right, namely, to place British officers in the Afghan frontier towns; and with so little satisfaction in the results obtained that, except during the first years of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty, all the men who have since been concerned with the Government of India, have been kept in a state of miserable unrest, between the incessant demands of the military authorities for more annexations to enable them to seize and hold that ideal frontier which still recedes as they advance; and the anxious remonstrances of successive finance ministers, distracted with the difficulty of finding the means to meet the ever-increasing drain on a treasury which it was at no time easy to fill; to say nothing of the warning of Civil administrators who have had to deal with the discontent which that drain has evoked among all classes of the people.

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CHAPTER II

INDIA'S NEW FRONTIER—ITS GARRISONS AND ITS APPROACHES

IT was not without good reason that, at the risk of wearying my readers, I made in the preceding chapter so careful an examination of the Minutes of Lord Lawrence, and the Memoranda of Sir William Mansfield, Sir Henry Durand, and Sir Henry Norman. My object was to show that these illustrious statesmen and soldiers not only condemned the particular aims which the partisans of the "forward" policy were pursuing in those days, but that they foresaw the lengths to which that policy would carry the British and Indian Governments, and met, in advance, the arguments by which its later developments would be supported. It is the fashion to speak slightingly of the opinions held by these men, as narrow, short-

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sighted, timid, and, at best, of temporary application; but those who will take the trouble to study the great State-papers in which they were expounded, will be likely to agree with me that they had all the width which comes from regarding a subject from every point of view; all the far-sightedness which an intimate knowledge of the past can give; all the courage which springs from a calm conviction of strength adequate to meet danger, should danger arise, and all the permanence which results from basing judgments on principles and expectations on an acquaintance with human nature. Opinions resting on such foundations are not liable to change with change of circumstance, as Lord Roberts' views have changed, and might change again, were he, a second time, to be brought face to face with the practical consequences of the policy which now seems to him so entirely above cavil and beyond dispute.

No one who read the letter in which he made excuses for the men who held erroneous views on frontier policy thirty years ago, could guess that within half that period of time he himself had shared those opinions, and that his bold and

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strong advocacy of them had no inconsiderable share in determining the frontier policy of the years immediately following the termination of the Afghan War of 1878-80. That policy was one of retrogression on all the three lines by which British armies had entered Afghanistan on the 21st November, 1878.[1] A popular government was organized in the Kuram Valley, which was then evacuated. On the Khyber side all regular troops were withdrawn, though we kept our hold on this route, as far as Lundi Kotal, by means of subsidized Afridi levies. On the Kandahar side that city was handed over to the new Amir, Abdur Rahman; and although the Pishin Valley was retained as an assigned district,[2] the railway line leading up to it from Sibi was abandoned by the orders of Lord Hartington, then Secretary of

[1] Sir F. Roberts counselled complete retirement from the Kuram and the Khyber, the two routes with which, at the time of writing his Memorandum of May 29, 1880, he was acquainted, and the retention of the Kandahar line, of which he then had had no experience.

[2] An assigned district is one of which we collect the revenues, paying over any surplus there may be, after the expenses of administration have been defrayed, to the prince from whom we hold it.

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State for India, and the rails, so far as they had already been laid, pulled up.

The position thus created remained unchanged till the so-called Penjdeh incident, in 1885, provoked an outbreak of Russophobia so strong and enduring that it swept away all the military, political, and financial considerations which, for a time, had held the "forward" school of politicians in check, and has not expended its force up to the present hour. Under the strong initiative of Sir F. Roberts, the new Commander-in-Chief in India, feverish activity began to reign all along India's north-west border. The construction of the railway from Sibi to Pishin was resumed, and the line opened in 1887. The Khwaja Amran range of mountains, the western limit of the Pishin district, was pierced by a great tunnel, and a strong post in advance, to cover the western mouth of that work, was established at New Chaman, in Afghan territory, notwithstanding the vigorous protests of the Amir. The railway was pushed forward through this tunnel, and large quantities of rail, destined some day to connect New Chaman with Kandahar, were collected and stored at the former place. At the same time engineers were

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busy constructing a great military road between the Indus and Pishin, *vid* the Borai Valley, and the fortified lines at Quetta were being largely extended.

These measures could not be taken without arousing the fear and suspicion of the inhabitants of the territories through which roads and railways were being carried. Fear and suspicion culminated from time to time in open opposition; open opposition had to be crushed by military expeditions, after each of which a portion of the force remained behind to overawe discontent and carry out the policy of bringing the whole country lying between the Amir's dominions and those of Great Britain, under British influence.

In this way our troops spread laterally through the Kakar Hills and down the Zhob Valley, as well as advancing beyond the Khwaja Amran range. The occupation of so much fresh territory necessitated a large increase in the size of the force that had hitherto sufficed to garrison Quetta and the Pishin Valley. This necessity was met in the first instance by drawing on the reserve of 10,753 European and 8,334 native soldiers which had been provided, whilst Sir Donald Stewart was yet

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Commander-in-Chief, as an insurance against the risk that, at some future day, additional troops might be needed and not be forthcoming.[1] In 1887-88, however, a further addition of 10,886 natives was made to the established strength of the army in India, thus bringing up the total increase to 29,973, a figure which corresponds almost accurately with the estimate made by Sir Henry Norman and accepted by Sir William Mansfield of the minimum number of men that would have to be added to the Anglo-Indian army, should the views of Jacob and Green ever prevail over those of which they themselves were the champions, whilst the manner in which these political occupations were carried out was just that insidious creeping over the country, "like a mist,"[2] no particular notice of our proceedings being taken either within India or beyond it,[3] which Green had recommended and Sir William Mansfield had denounced as dis-

[1] Sir Auckland Colvin in *Nineteenth Century*, October, 1894.

[2] Minutes of Sir William Mansfield in Papers relating to Central Asia and Quetta.

[3] Sir H. Green's "Suggestions for the Protection of the North-West Frontier of India."

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honouring to British policy. Certainly, few people, either in England or in India, have, to this day, any conception of the fact that on this portion of the north-west frontier alone, about 43,500 square miles have been added to the British Empire within the last fifteen years, by far the greater part of which since 1885.

Whilst on the south-west of our long border-line British troops were stealing towards Kandahar and silently diffusing themselves through the territories of the Duranis, Achikzais, Kakars, Musakhels, Luni Pathans, Khetrans, Bozdars, Zmaris, &c., at its north-eastern extremity the Kashmir Imperial Service Troops and the Escort of the British Resident at Gilgit had begun the same process of bringing hitherto independent tribes under the political authority of Great Britain. Hard fighting ensued, with heavy losses on both sides, and, as the magnitude of the task undertaken became apparent, the occupying force had to be strengthened by the addition of a regiment of Pioneers, a wing of a Sikh regiment, and a number of British officers, withdrawn from already under-officered native regiments in India, whilst an enormous outlay was incurred, not once

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and for all, but year by year, in making and maintaining roads, and in provisioning these distant and, in winter, inaccessible outposts.

Simultaneously with the growth of our responsibilities on and beyond the Kashmir frontier, the Kuram Valley, which had been abandoned in 1881 as a worthless possession, was re-occupied, and is now held up to the Peiwar Kotal.

Last year, having previously bought the consent of the Amir of Afghanistan to our dealing as we might please with all the independent tribes still remaining between his territories and ours, a Delimitation Commission, with a very large escort, was sent up into the hills of Waziristan to determine our new political frontier. The inhabitants, enraged at the intrusion of several thousand British troops into their territories, and not at all inclined to acquiesce in an arrangement to which they had not been parties, fell upon the camp of the boundary commissioner in the night, and very nearly overwhelmed its defenders. To avenge this attack and to punish some raids into the Zhob Valley, in one of which a British sergeant had been killed, an expedition, under General Lockhart, was despatched last winter into Waziristan,

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which, after some fighting and much loss of life among our troops from sickness,[1] reduced the country to submission, by the ordinary methods followed in such cases, viz., the blowing up of towers, and the seizure of cattle and grain,[2] after which the work of delimination was continued, and that of constructing roads and establishing fortified posts begun.

Up to the present time this was the last fruit of the "forward" policy, but now another is ripe for plucking.

As the agreement with the Amir of Afghanistan extended to the tribes inhabiting Swat, Bajaur, and Chitral, as well as to the Waziris, the latter State, commanding, as it does, routes into Afghanistan, India, and Kashmir, became the next object of the "forward" party's desire. An excuse for occupying it was soon provided by the simple, but costly expedient of sending a British officer

[1] According to General Lockhart's Despatch of May, 1895, 171 deaths in four months from pneumonia alone.

[2] On the 8th of January, one column captured 3,500, and on the 17th of the same month 1,600 head of cattle, besides large quantities of grain and bhoosa. (*Times of India*, of January 12th and 26th.)

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with a small escort, on a temporary mission to Chitral, allowing him to remain on there after the purpose for which he had been sent had been accomplished, and then when, at last, his safety had been endangered by an outbreak of the civil strife usually raging in that country, by despatching an army to his rescue.

In this instance, however, the magnitude of the operations required, and the enormous cost, have interfered with the realization of the hopes which inspired them. Public attention has been so powerfully attracted towards Chitral that it has become impossible to apply to that State the policy of insidious advance which had been previously so successful in saddling India with territory which she did not covet, and England with responsibilities of the nature and extent of which she was ignorant. In the former country, native and European newspapers alike protested against the fresh drain on its waning resources; and in the latter, old Indian statesmen and soldiers of experience and distinction[1] raised their voices

[1] Sir Neville Chamberlain, Lord Chelmsford, Sir John Adye, Sir James Lyall, Sir Auckland Colvin, and Sir Lepel Griffin.

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loudly against the foolish and short-sighted policy which, for lack of steady public opposition, had come to be regarded as necessary and inevitable.

Lord Rosebery's Government had decided to withdraw from Chitral, and had sent orders to that effect; now the question is again under consideration, but it is hard to believe that an administration in which the Duke of Devonshire holds a prominent place, will look with favour on its permanent occupation; since to him was due the retirement behind the Khwaja Amran range, and the stoppage of unremunerative military works; and there is no reason to believe that he has changed his opinion as to the best way of assuring the safety of the British Indian Empire since, in 1881, he gave such striking proofs of his distrust of the methods recommended by the school of politicians, which clamoured then for the retention of Kandahar, as it clamours to-day for the retention of Chitral. Still, it is unwise to trust to the influence of a single man, with colleagues whose views on this point, at least, have always been opposed to his own; and therefore the necessity for impressing the truth about the military situation on our Indian North-West

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Frontier on the public mind, is more urgent and vital to-day than it was before the change of Ministry; all the more urgent and vital because, with the occupation of Chitral, the last "buffer" between India and Afghanistan would be swept away, and the next struggle between the two opposing Indian frontier policies will be over the question of the annexation of Afghanistan itself.[1]

I have shown how our frontier has been gradually extended westward and northward, till it embraces territories containing about 76,500 square miles, inhabited by tribes whose fighting strength is estimated by Lord Roberts to be little short of a quarter of a million of men; let us now see how this enormous area is held and defended.

In the Quetta district, which extends from Khelat on the west to the Gomal river on the east, a distance, as the crow flies, of 280 miles, and from Sibi on the south to New Chaman on the north, a distance of 130 miles, and which contains about 43,500 square miles, there are less than 9,000 troops of all ranks and arms, and 24 guns, of whom 3,500 men and 18 guns are detailed for the

[1] The above passage was written before the British Government's decision had been announced.

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defence of Quetta itself. Three points—New Chaman, which covers the western mouth of the Khojak tunnel, Loralai, which protects the military road between Dera Ghazi Khan and Pishin, and Fort Sandeman, in the centre of the Zhob Valley—absorb three regiments of infantry, a regiment of cavalry and the six remaining guns; and the rest of the force is divided among 13 posts, lying from 30 to 50 miles apart, the detachments consisting sometimes of a mere handful of infantry and cavalry, as at Moghal Kote, near the confluence of the Zhob and Gomal rivers, on the border of Waziristan, and at Mir Ali Khel, some 40 miles from Moghal Kote, and its nearest support.

Now of all these posts I venture to assert that not one is held in anything like adequate strength. What would be the fate of the tiny detachments in the Kakar Hills and the Zhob Valley if those regions were ever to witness such a sudden rising of the tribes as surged round General Roberts' little army in December, 1879? In such a storm, Loralai and Fort Sandeman might be able to hold their own, on condition that, like the rising referred to, that storm proved as short as it was violent; but supposing the Russians, having occupied

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Herat, were to begin moving on Kandahar? A prudent commander, whether his orders were to forestall the enemy in the occupation of the latter city or to remain quietly at Quetta awaiting reinforcements and watching events, would at once call in all his scattered forces to strengthen his own weak position—for what are 3,500 men as a garrison for the long lines of that great fortress?—and to spare himself the necessity of having to send out relief expeditions, in every direction, to extricate beleagured detachments from imminent peril? But why maintain, in time of peace, at great expense, a number of weak outposts, which would be abandoned at the first prospect of war? Concentration, not dissemination, is the military watch-word in the face of danger; and it would be just as well to begin where we shall have to end, especially as the maintenance of these strategically worthless posts keeps a number of powerful and warlike tribes in a chronic state of exasperation, without in any way consolidating our authority over them. As a matter of fact, though tranquillity may prevail, our troops, not only in the Quetta district, but throughout the whole of the territories lying between India's

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administrative and political frontiers, are all encamped in an enemy's country, where their position exactly resembles that so graphically described by Jacob as existing in Sind when he assumed command of the frontier of Beluchistan. "The troops at Khanghar (now Jacobabad), Shalpur, and other posts," so he wrote, "were shut up within walls and cantonments, completely isolated from the country-folk. The troops were fed, both man and horse, as if on ship-board, by the Commissariat Department. Provisions, even to forage for the cavalry horses, were stored for the various fortified posts at enormous cost to the State. Everything was as in a state of siege."[1]

Unfortunately there is this difference between the situation in Sind half a century ago, and that in the Kakar Hills, or Waziristan, or at Gilgit to-day, that the latter regions do not lend themselves to the measures by which Jacob soon changed the aspect of affairs in the former province. There can be no "pulling down of forts as impertinent to cavalry and peculiarly improper for Oriental border warfare, in which moral force is of such mighty power"; no rapid and unexpected scouring

[1] Views and Opinions of General John Jacob.

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of the country from end to end, because cavalry are practically useless among mountains, where even infantry have to manœuvre with the greatest circumspection, and, unless covered by fortifications, are liable to surprise; neither can there be any gradual weaning of the people from their warlike habits by the substitution of useful employment, for predatory raids as a way of adding to their scanty means of subsistence. Where Jacob made canals, or induced the villagers to make them for themselves and to take pride in their work, our commanders, beyond the administrative frontier, can do nothing but construct military roads—often by forced labour, always for the more complete subjugation of the inhabitants of the districts through which they run—along every yard of which springs up a fresh crop of sullen resentment and fierce discontent. It is this fact, that our presence in these barren intractable wastes can do nothing to convert them into fruitful fields, that constitutes the worst and most hopeless feature of the situation. There can be no question of attaching the people to *our* interests when we can do nothing to further *theirs*; and as the peace, which we impose upon them, does not bear its

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proverbial fruit—prosperity, and does deprive them of their chief delight—fighting and plundering, there seems every probability that, to the end of the chapter, we shall stand before them in the hateful light of conquerors and policemen, and need to be always on our guard against isolated attacks and combined insurrection. The latter contingency is most likely to occur in connection with one of two possible events—an advance of Russia into Afghanistan, or a rebellion against British rule in India itself; and both the advance and the rebellion are, year by year, being rendered more probable by the policy designed to hold the former State in check and to minister to the security of the latter.

In my former book I gave my reasons for believing that a Russian invasion of India on any serious scale is an impossible thing; but a forward movement on Russia's part, which would shake our present unstable military position to its foundations, may easily come to be within her wishes and her power. The temptation to take advantage of the extremely dangerous situation in which our troops beyond the border have been placed, and to profit by the hatred which our occupation of their

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mountains has awakened in the breasts of many thousands of armed men, is so strong and so constant that it will be strange if she does not yield to it some day.

Russian money and Russian officers, even without the co-operation of a Russian army, would go far to overcome that lack of cohesion between the different tribes in which we have hitherto found our security; and the number of Russian troops that would be required to make the destruction of our weak garrisons a certainty might be so small that, if their advance were connived at by the ruler of Afghanistan, it could be made with what, in that part of the world, would be considered ease and rapidity.

In the Quetta district alone is Russia likely to take *direct* hostile action against us, but in all the other occupied districts she might work against us *indirectly* through their inhabitants, and in each the military situation is thoroughly unsound. In Waziristan about 6,000 square miles are held by 2,500 men and six guns,[1] in the Kuram Valley,

[1] It has recently been announced that the Tochi Delimitation Escort, consisting of one cavalry regiment, one mountain battery, one company of sappers and miners, and four

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which Lord Roberts, in 1880, declared "could probably never do with a less" force than that which then occupied it, viz., 5,313 infantry, 829 cavalry, and 19 guns; there are now 950 men and three guns; on the Samana range of mountains, between Kuram and Kohat, forty miles from the latter place, on which they depend for support, hemmed in by the Zymukhts on the south, and by the Orakzais on the north, are several weak posts, furnished by one regiment of native infantry;[1] in the Gilgit district, the wildest and most inaccessible of all our new acquisitions, comprising about 23,000 square miles, there are 3,200 men and six

regiments of infantry, are, owing to the restlessness of its tribes, to remain temporarily in Waziristan; but these troops do not efficiently support the garrison of Wano, as the two places are separated from each other by the whole length of Waziristan, one of the most rugged and difficult countries in the world.

[1] In 1891, after the first Miranzai Expedition, the regiment which was employed in constructing these posts was driven from the Samana Heights by the Orakzais, and it took ten days to collect a sufficient force at Kohat to retake the position. If this was the case within forty miles of our original frontier, how great might be the difficulty of giving timely aid to the numerous posts scattered over our new territories, hundreds of miles from that frontier.

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guns; and in one and all of these territories the Indian authorities are trusting to good luck for the safety of the meagre garrisons and their necessary complement of defenceless camp-followers. Not only is the occupying force in each inadequate to meet a serious emergency—and serious emergencies may arise at any moment—not only are the troops in one district unable to come to the assistance of their comrades in any of the others, but the rear-communications of all are imperfect and precarious. To the ordinary Englishman, who for years past has heard with pride and satisfaction of the wonderful roads and railways which our Engineers have been busy constructing beyond India's administrative frontier, this may seem a hard saying; but those who have followed the story of these stupendous works must be well aware of its truth.

To connect Quetta with Sibi no less than three railways have been undertaken since 1880, one up the Bolan Pass direct to Quetta, a second up the Hurnai Valley to Bostan in Pishin, twenty-one miles in advance of Quetta, and united to it by a branch line; and the third *viâ* the Mushkaf Valley.

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The science and skill of our Engineers have been equal to the making of each of the three; they have pierced mountains with tunnels—long and short—on the Mushkaf line nineteen in a distance of fifty-nine miles; they have thrown bridges of every kind and span, across rivers and ravines—forty-seven on the aforenamed line; they have carried their rails up steep inclines, along lofty embankments, round sharp curves;—in a word, they have vindicated man's power to subdue Nature, so far as the planning and executing of these great works is concerned; but when it has come to *maintaining* what they have made, Nature has proved herself stronger than they. On the direct Bolan line she long since won the day, and man retired discomfited before her; on the Sind-Pishin line, where the battle is still being waged, the victory will soon be hers.

Year after year, on this section of the North-Western Railway, he has reconstructed, altered, repaired, and she has swept away, undermined, and overwhelmed. In 1893 nine new bridges had to be erected to replace others which the floods of 1892 had destroyed.[1] That year much labour was

[1] Administrative Report of the Indian Railways, 1893-94.

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expended on training the river near Mudgorge "so as to minimize the erosion of the toes of the slips," and "on improving the drainage of the threatened localities," and yet on the 26th of February, 1894, at this very Mudgorge, after several days of continuous rain, the land slipped away about fifty feet from under the sleepers and rails, leaving them suspended in mid-air for a long length, "so that the rails which had already been put down eight times would require now to be laid for the ninth time"; and "other minor slips had wrecked the line completely for about 800 feet." At Khanai, beyond Mudgorge, the raging torrent had burst the bunds which confined its waters and scoured away the railway embankment. All goods traffic had to be stopped, and the three special trains which were to have taken the Middlesex Regiment to Bombay, postponed indefinitely; in fact the first train was returned to Quetta from Khanai, and it was not till March 11th that the line was sufficiently restored for the movement of the troops to proceed, although even then they had to be transhipped at Mudgorge.[1]— Things were no better on the stretch of line north

[1] *Times of India*, March 6, 1894.

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of the Bostan Junction. Between Syed Hamed and Gulistan the track was dangerous owing to the abnormal rush of water, whilst the Khojak tunnel itself was leaking badly, the masonry with which it is lined, proving ineffectual in preventing the water, which percolates through the hill, from pouring down on the roofs of the carriages as the trains travelled through.[1]

Earlier in February there had been heavy snowfalls between Dirgi and Fuller's Camp, interrupting the traffic on several occasions; and on the 12th March an enormous slip occurred in the shale cutting just above Puddle Hollow, which covered up with debris 600 feet of line, and crumpled up two crib bridges.[2] At the end of June, in consequence of the bursting of two bunds above Sukkur, the Indus wrecked the Sibi line near Ruk,[3] nearly two miles of it being under water. Early in July other bunds were breached, and some portion or other of the line continued to be carried away daily, resulting in serious interruptions to traffic; and whilst this was going on at

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Administrative Report.

[3] *Times of India*, August 31, 1894.

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one end of the line, at the other end, the western mouth of the Khojak tunnel had been blocked, "so that through running could not be restored for some days, and there had been new slips near Mudgorge by which traffic had also been interrupted."

According to the latest Administrative Report on the Railways in India, the damage done by floods to the trans-Indus military railways during the official year 1894-95 was no less than that suffered by them in 1893-94. On the 2nd July a great bund was breached south of Sukkur, and, to save the line from destruction, a large opening 800 feet wide had to be made in its embankment between Ruk and Shikarpur, and notwithstanding this precaution it was three feet deep in water from mile 319 to mile 326. More outlets were made, but it was not until the 30th August that loaded wagons could be hand-shunted across, and it was some days later before an engine could safely pass over the line. On the 22nd of the same month other parts of this railway were breached by floods, and on these portions traffic was not resumed until 15th August. On the 24th July the three heavy training spurs in Mudgorge were clean swept away, and the river returned to

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its old channel close under the cliff to work mischief to the Sibi-Pishin line. The great Khojak tunnel suffered too from similar causes. On the 15th July an exceptionally heavy storm—the storms in these parts are apparently always exceptionally severe—broke over the Khwaja Amran mountains, and the cutting at the Chaman end of the tunnel was filled up by the debris, which it took a full month to clear away.

As in spring and summer, so in autumn and winter; indeed, according to a correspondent of the *Times of India*, writing on October 1st, 1893, "the sectional heads of the North-Western Railway look grave whenever a shower of rain comes down." But the best commentary on the condition of the Hurnai Valley Line is to be found in the fact that, though it has been in existence only eight years, yet another is being constructed to take its place. The correspondent of the *Times of India* from whose letter I have just quoted boldly pronounces the new railway altogether beyond the pale of floods, except between Herokh, at mile 503, and Doyan, where, in a distance of four miles there are "nine bridges, all built specially strong to battle against possible floods, which

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rush down with terrific force." But on turning to the Administrative Report already quoted from, I find that between mile 474½ and 486½ extensive training works were being carried out; "the talus across which the line is located being very steep in places, and the floods moving enormous masses of gravel and boulders which, unless properly regulated, will overwhelm the works." The Report also mentions the fact that on the first division of this railway, stretching from Sibi northwards for twenty-five miles, seven out of eight tunnels were in treacherous ground; and the *Times of India* speaks of great cracks having shown themselves in some of the completed tunnels, and of their mouths being blocked by masses of fallen debris.[1] All this goes

[1] The Mushkaf-Bolan line was to have been ready this summer, but its opening has been put off till next year. I have been unable to ascertain how far this delay has been caused by difficulty in carrying out the original works, and how far by injury to the portions already completed. It is, I believe, intended as an alternative line to Quetta; in practice, I think, it will simply take the place of the Hurnai Valley Railway, because the cost of maintaining two lines will be too great to be faced, and the Hurnai Railway, as probably the less durable and the longer, and certainly the less satisfactory from a military point of view, as the loss of Bostan Junction would deprive us of the command of it, is the more likely to be abandoned.

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to dissipate the hope that the Mushkaf-Bolan line will enjoy complete immunity from the natural dangers from which the Sind-Pishin line has suffered; whilst it will share with the latter the liability to frequent interruptions of traffic between the Indus and Jacobabad, and between Quetta and New Chaman, and, owing to the large number of tunnels and bridges by which it is distinguished, it is specially open to injury by human agency.

One cause of possible catastrophe to which both are alike subject I have not yet mentioned, I refer to earthquakes, which occur in all parts of Afghanistan and the adjacent territories, and are often of great violence. Mr. McGeorge,[1] describing one which occurred in the Quetta district in the winter of 1892, mentions that in the Khojak tunnel the noise was deafening; that workmen engaged on the roofing were thrown from their perches to the ground, and that afterwards the engineers discovered, to their surprise, that the earth's crust had contracted 2½ feet in the vicinity of the tunnel works. "One shrinks," he writes, "from thinking what the effect on the Khojak

1 "Ways and Works in India."

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tunnel would have been had it come within the destructive action of the shock."[1]

Even, then, if the Mushkaf-Bolan line proves more stable than that which it is to supersede, it cannot ensure to our troops in the Quetta district absolutely firm communications with their base in India, and, unfortunately, the roads leading up to and through that district are just as likely to be interrupted by natural causes as the railways, though, owing to their greater simplicity of construction, less open to be wrecked by men; whilst the fact that the Indian Military Authorities have come to depend upon the railways for the movement of troops and supplies, in this particular region, has made them more careless of ordinary

[1] The best known illustration of the degree to which Afghanistan is subject to earthquakes, and the influence which they may exercise upon warlike operations, was afforded by what occurred during the siege of Jellalabad in 1841, when one side of the defences so laboriously constructed by the British garrison was levelled to the ground in a single hour, and our troops owed their escape from destruction to the accident that the beseigers failed to discover the breach till it had been partially repaired. Many minor shocks followed, and for weeks Sale's force did little else but repair by day what had been destroyed by night.

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means of transport,[1] so that it would be a work of time to fall back upon the Bolan road should the Bolan railway fail us; nor is the military road from Dera Ghazi Khan to Pishin any safer against earthquakes, floods, and hostile tribesmen, whilst, on account of the greater altitude which it attains in parts, it is in more peril of being closed by snow in winter.[2]

Turning to the other occupied territories we

[1] Even in the Chitral Expedition the Transport Service has been the weak point; and yet, inadequate as it has proved, it was only obtained by depriving the Cavalry regiments over a large part of India, even some of those of the Bombay Presidency, of their baggage mules.

[2] A line, about 300 miles long, to start from Dera Ishmael Khan, traverse the Zhob Valley, pierce the Kakar Hills, and eventually join the Sibi-Pishin section of the North-Western Railway, has seriously been projected by the Indian Government, though financial reasons have hitherto interfered with its construction. This line will not be connected with the Indian system of railways, because there is no bridge over the Indus at Dera Ishmael Khan, nor any likelihood of one ever being built, and, except for military purposes, it will be entirely useless, as the country through which it will run produces nothing which it can export, and the Central Asian trade will be more than provided for by the maintenance, in efficient working order, of the existing railway from New Chaman to Sukkur, or of the line which is to take its place.

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find the same natural conditions prevailing in one and all. In Waziristan road-making is only in its infancy as yet; but, looking to the character of the country, it is safe to predict that any roads which may be constructed will suffer from the same vicissitudes as those in the Quetta command, and that railways, should they ever be undertaken, would prove no more stable than the Sind-Pishin line. The roads leading to the Kuram Forts, especially that on the left bank of the river, are much exposed to flank attacks from the warlike tribes inhabiting the difficult ranges of hills by which the valley is shut in, whilst that on the right bank is often cut by heavy floods, and, as I showed in "Can Russia Invade India?" the road leading from the Kuram Forts to Kabul, to command which is the only reason for occupying the Kuram at all, crosses a pass so high, that it would be folly to throw troops beyond it, unless sure of being able to meet their requirements in winter by the Khyber route, in which case there would be nothing gained by making use of the more circuitous and difficult line of advance.

The nature of the road upon which the Gilgit garrison has to depend, not only for reinforcements

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but for food, forage, and military stores, is so well known that it will suffice to say here that it traverses mountains so high and precipitous, swept by winds of such exceptional bitterness, and visited by snowstorms of such violence and duration, that the work of reinforcing and provisioning has to be carried on within very narrow limits, and within these, at a terrible cost of human and animal life.

Yet another point has to be considered before the danger, present and prospective, of the military situation on the North-West Frontier can be fully understood—that point, the constitution of its defending force.

It will be remembered that Lawrence and Mansfield and Norman all deprecated the employment of regiments containing Pathans, or other northern hillmen in the countries beyond our border.[1] With their usual strong common-sense and intimate

[1] The great majority of the Independent Tribes are Afghans. We call them Pathans, as though that was the name of another race, but Major H. G. Raverty, the best authority on the subject, says all Afghans call themselves Pus'htanah as well as Afghans, and that there is no more difference between an Afghan, a Pus'htun, or a Patan, than between a Grecian, a Greek, or a man of Greece.

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knowledge of human nature, they recognized that it was too much to expect military fidelity to outweigh family affection and tribal ties, and they predicted that if we attempted to hold newly-conquered regions by means of their own inhabitants, we should some day be overwhelmed by a catastrophe greater than that of the Indian Mutiny.

On this point they were in full accord with General John Jacob, who was quite innocent of all intention of carrying out his scheme for the better protection of India, by the hands of Afghans or Beluchis, and would not suffer a single man of either nationality in the splendid force with which he kept the peace in Sind, even through the dark days of the great Mutiny. "Every Brahooee (Belooch of Khelat), so he wrote, "whom we enlist is certainly either a thief, a coward, or a traitor, or is, very probably, all three combined . . . . Were I proceeding on service against the tribes bordering on our frontier I should consider the real strength of my force to be increased by the absence of such soldiers. They could not be trusted without imminent risk of failure and disgrace . . . Those Afghans, &c., are utterly faithless, and we can never feel a just confidence that they will be

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true in the hour of need . . . This practice (that of enlisting such men) is fraught with extreme danger, for in case of service against the tribes beyond our border—the brethren of those people—we should assuredly have in our ranks as many spies and traitors as we had Brahooees."

The catastrophe predicted by Lawrence and his military advisers has not yet happened; but in the Afghan War there were numerous indications that the elements out of which it may spring were present in our native army; numerous confirmations of the wisdom of Jacob's practice in the matter of recruiting. On General Roberts' night march to the Spingawi Kotal, and the subsequent assault on the Afghan "sungas," the Pathan companies of the 29th Punjab Native Infantry showed themselves quite untrustworthy; and on all the lines of advance, desertions were frequent, and the enemy were kept thoroughly well-informed as to our plans and movements. Similar attestations to the truth of the warnings which we continue to despise, have not been wanting in more recent days; the attack on the camp of the Delimitation Commissioner at Wano, for instance, was led by deserters; and that there were traitors within that camp was conclusively

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proved by the accurate acquaintance with our dispositions displayed by the Waziris. I fancy most officers who have served on the frontier will support me in saying that everywhere, and at all times, the Independent Tribes have our deserters in their ranks and their spies in ours ; and many will agree with me in thinking that the stealing of arms and ammunition which goes on merrily all along the border, is often carried out by deserters, or discharged soldiers, and connived at by men still in our service.

But setting aside the immediate danger from desertion and treachery, the mere fact that so many men of the tribes in whose territories we are encamped, are yearly passing through the ranks of the Indian Army adds enormously to the prospective insecurity of our tenure of power among them. Trained by us in military discipline and the knowledge of the tactics we employ, they are likely to prove far more formidable enemies in the future than they have been in the past, since they will only need the leaders, whom Russia can supply, to turn their vast numerical superiority over us to full account. And yet there are men among us who defend the "forward" policy by the argument that

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we have in the territories of the Independent Tribes an inexhaustible recruiting ground, and that to abstain from occupying them ourselves would be to make a present to the Russians of their magnificent fighting strength!

Is it so hard to see that, so far as it is safe to employ Pathans in our army at all, the supply will always be equal to the demand, since soldiering is their natural avocation, which they will follow whether our posts are scattered over their lands or not; and that to fill our ranks with such men, whilst trenching on the independence of the tribes to which they belong, is indeed to risk making a present of their fighting strength to our rival, and that in the most unpleasant way possible?

I shall probably be told that my argument applies quite as much to India as to Waziristan, inasmuch as both are conquered countries which we hold in part by the swords of their own inhabitants; but the cases are not parallel, for in the one country the military element forms but an infinitesimal portion of the population, whereas in the other the military element is the whole people. In the one case we have an enormous mass of human beings to work upon, in a thousand different

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ways, on whose natural love of peace and habitual submission to authority we can count, as a set-off to the possible disloyalty of certain individuals or classes, even if we cannot flatter ourselves that our rule is accepted from a conscious appreciation of the benefits it confers upon them; in the other case, we have nothing to work upon but a horde of semi-savage warriors, one of whose chief sources of gain, in their eyes a quite legitimate one, we are obliged to close to them, and who would lose nothing by our being driven out of their country to-morrow. It is *not* on the sword that our Empire in India really rests, but upon our administration, which, on the whole, keeps the bulk of the inhabitants passively content, and so we can afford to guard it by men taken from their midst—a due proportion between the number of British and Native troops being carefully observed.

And this reminds us that Sir Henry Norman placed that proportion for the Kingdom of Afghanistan, the country whose occupation was under discussion when he wrote, at one-third, and Sir William Mansfield at one-half, and leads us to ask what, in this respect, is the actual state of affairs in those newly-occupied territories which so closely

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resemble Afghanistan in their natural features, and in the character of their peoples; and again the answer is not reassuring; the proportion of Native troops to British in Quetta being four and a half to one, whilst in Waziristan, the Kuram, and Gilgit, there is not a single British soldier.

And there is yet one point which must be touched upon before we can feel that we have taken a comprehensive view of this branch of our subject: I refer to the fact that, with the exception of the Pathans and Beluchis, against whom the most experienced men of both schools of Indian politicians have agreed in warning us, our whole force beyond the border, European and Native alike, are living separated from their wives, with the consequence, to which it is folly to shut our eyes, that the cause which did so much to fan the flame of Afghan hatred of us in the first Afghan War, and was not absent from the minds of the fierce mob which destroyed Cavagnari and his escort, in the second, is ever present in our new possessions, and must be doing its natural work in embittering their people against us, for however immoral the Afghan may be in his own habits, he is as jealous

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as other men of interference with his women by foreigners.[1]

Not content with enlisting individual Beluchis and Pathans, the Indian military authorities have raised in Beluchistan, throughout the Quetta district, and in the Kuram, a number of tribal levies, in other words, bodies of irregular troops, composed exclusively of men in whose lands we have established ourselves, led, not by English officers, but by their own chiefs, and on these treacherous and, at heart, inimical allies they are relying to make good the deficiency in the strength of the regular forces which they are able to spare from their legitimate duty of preserving order in India itself.

Now, tribal levies have their uses, and are perfectly innocuous *so long as they are in advance of our position and in no way mixed up with our troops*, witness the services rendered ever since 1881 by the Khyber levies in keeping open that great trade route; but in the rear and on the flanks of an occupying army they are dangerous in the extreme, as was fully proved during the

[1] Norman alludes to this point, but only in relation to its effect on the morals of the British portion of the trans-frontier force.

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late Afghan War, when those same Khyberis, whilst taking our subsidies and professing to assist in guarding our communications, were actually engaged in plundering our baggage and commissariat trains, and in cutting off camp followers and stragglers whenever the opportunity of doing so presented itself. The Afghan is what he was, and will act in the future as he acted in the past; which means that when the occasion arises to prepare for which we have summoned him to our aid, he will turn against us, without the slightest compunction, the arms, training, and knowledge of our weakness with which we have been insane enough to furnish him.

But since our new territories are barren of resources, inhabited by races whom it is not in our power to conciliate, approached by roads and railways on which no certain reliance can be placed, and garrisoned by troops whom it is in part unwise to trust and in part unwise to employ, supplemented by levies which are dangerous in exact proportion to their numbers and efficiency, it is clear that in them at least a "scientific" frontier has not been attained. We are, indeed, at certain

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points beyond the screen of mountains which hid what was taking place in Central Asia from Jacob's eyes, but we are also far from the standpoint which accepted Quetta as a complete guarantee against Russian ambition; and we are certainly much less able to meet Russian invasion with overwhelming numbers, should it ever be attempted, than in the days when the Indus was our line of defence, with Jacobabad as the "bastion of the front attack."[1] All the annexations of which I have told the story have been carried out, or profess to have been carried out, for the purpose of strengthening India against Russia; yet, with the exception of Quetta, there is, as I have already said, hardly a post throughout the enormous area covered by them which could play any part in a war between her and us; nor would Quetta's own part be the all-decisive one attributed to that fortress by General Jacob, since, by the construction of the military road through the Borai Valley, it has ceased, for the purpose which the Russians would have in view, to be the salient which must be taken before anything can be attempted against us.[2] That purpose would be, *not* the invasion of

[1] General Jacob's Letter to Lord Canning. [2] *Ibid.*

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India, but the destruction of our forces *outside* that country, and the shock which such disaster would give our authority within it; and for the attainment of this end the masking of Quetta would be as possible as the masking of Jacobabad[1] in an advance on the Indus, would be impossible, *unless meantime we have ceased to play at occupation and have everywhere established ourselves in such force that Russia and the tribes combined would fail to shake our position.* The adoption of this course would, however, compel us to add another Army Corps to our Anglo-Indian Army, and so consummate India's financial ruin, or else to denude that country of troops, and, in so doing, to risk the loss of the kernel in clinging to its shell. I do not think that the politicians and

[1] It has been privately objected to me that Jacobabad is unfitted to play the part which I have assigned to it in my Scheme of Defence, on account of the great heat which prevails there in summer; but I gave, I think, conclusive reasons to show that no Russian invasion need be looked for at that season of the year (or, indeed, at any), and as it could be put in an efficient state of defence with the ample means at our disposal in the course of a few weeks, there would be no need to occupy it in force till it was quite certain that an invading army was about to start from Kandahar.

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strategists of the "forward" school are prepared to accept either alternative, and I do not believe that they are deceived as to the nature of the frontier with which they have so far succeeded in endowing India. They know as well as their opponents that it is hopelessly weak, practically and theoretically unscientific; but its defects are, in their eyes, its merit, since they will furnish them some day with the arguments which they will use to induce the British Government to assent to a still further advance. When the next wave of "Brevet-Mania" and "K.C.B.-Mania," coinciding with a fresh Russian scare, sweeps over the Anglo-Indian Army, it will be from *their* lips that we shall hear the plain, unvarnished truths which I have been labouring to impress upon my readers, but with a different application; for the moral of these truths is, for me, "backwards," whilst, for them, it would be "forwards."

Forward into Afghanistan, with her consent if it can be obtained, without it, if it be withheld; forward to Kandahar and Kabul; forward to the Hindu Kush; forward to the Oxus. Always and everywhere, there will be some obstacle concealing the movements of the enemy that must be

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swept away, some pass of which both ends must be held, some river of which both banks must be commanded, some nation which must be coerced into friendship; and, always and everywhere, the "scientific frontier" will elude their grasp and mock their hopes; not that it does not exist, but because they have turned their backs on it, and left it far behind; for what *is* a "scientific frontier"? Surely one which it is easy and cheap to defend and difficult and costly to attack; and no frontier in the world fulfils that definition more thoroughly than the frontier which satisfied Lawrence and Mansfield, Norman and Durand.

One word in conclusion. Just as Jacob and Green protested that there was nothing in common between the measures they advocated and those which involved us in the first Afghan War, so supporters of the "forward policy" to-day are anxious to dissociate it from the same policy as it was understood before the second Afghan War. It is, so we are constantly being told, a new policy; but no one has attempted to show in what its originality consists. At the present moment it is being applied to the Independent Tribes only; but these came within the scope of Jacob's and Green's

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schemes, were expressly named by Rawlinson as requiring to be considered even in the matter of the occupation of Quetta; and, under the general term of Afghans, they and their territories were present to the minds of Sir John Lawrence and his Council, when protesting against each and every scheme for the advancing of our frontier. It professes to respect the independence of these tribes; but similar professions accompanied our first and second advance into Afghanistan, and were not absent from the proposals which Lawrence and his advisers rejected. It claims to be conceived in the interests of Afghanistan as well as in those of India, but so did the policy of Lord Lytton. It is loud in its protestations of humanity, of its desire for the well-being of the peoples it feels compelled to bring under British control; but Lumsden's Note breathed the very spirit of Christian philanthropy, and our troops marched into the Khyber, the Kuram, and Khost, preceded by the proclamation of our kindness and goodwill.

No, the policy and its aims are quite unchanged; the only difference lies in the slower and more systematic manner in which those aims are being sought. Instead of rushing through the territories

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which divide India from Afghanistan proper—always the real object of the "forward" party's ambitions, since there, and not in Waziristan, or the Kuram, or in Gilgit, lie the strategical points the possession of which will, they believe, place India's security on a firm foundation—we are steadily reducing those tribes to submission and taking up a position from which we hope to be able to move rapidly on Kabul and Kandahar when the occasion for doing so shall present itself.

And certainly, in one way, that position is skilfully chosen; for as, all along our immense border-line, the territories occupied by the lawless tribes under our influence, march with the territories inhabited by the lawless tribes over whom the Amir of Afghanistan exercises a partial and precarious authority, there will not be the least difficulty in picking a quarrel with him at any convenient moment; and of that fact, notwithstanding his courteous reception of Sir Mortimer Durand, and the visit of his son to England, Abdur Rahman is undoubtedly fully aware; and if he ceded to us without a struggle the right to keep the Independent Tribes in order, and thus to become at all points his own immediate neighbour,

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it was probably because he saw that it would be as dangerous for him to refuse his consent to our doing what we had determined to do, as it had proved fatal to Shere Ali to resist our demand to be allowed to place British officers in his cities; or, perhaps, because he thought that the Independent Tribes would keep our hands full during his life-time, and that he should be doing the best he could for his successor in getting out of us meantime as much money and as many arms as he could; or, possibly, he may have hoped that we should find the work on which we were so eager to enter too much even for our resources, and that the wisdom thus painfully acquired would prove the best protection of his own country's independence;—but, whatever his hopes and his calculations, he would be no Afghan if he did not suspect our motives, distrust our promises, and, above all, nourish, deep down in his heart, the firm resolve to leave no stone unturned to keep us out of his dominions, whether we seek to enter them as friends or foes; for he knows that if we begin as the former we must end as the latter, inasmuch as the conditions under which campaigns have to be conducted in Afghanistan would soon

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compel us to confiscate the food of its inhabitants, and no ruler who ever sat upon the throne of Kabul could keep a hungry people from taking up arms against their despoilers.

I shall offer no opinion as to whether, the policy of insidious advance being persisted in, the struggle between India and Afghanistan will come in the life-time of the present Amir, or be delayed till the intestine troubles which are pretty sure to follow his death, shall give a colourable pretext for the invasion of the latter country by the former; but I do not hesitate to assert that we cannot stay indefinitely where we are, and that we shall inevitably, sooner or later, be drawn or driven on; unless, whilst freedom of choice is still ours, we can find courage to renounce the "forward" school of politicians and all their works, and to accept once more the guidance of the great statesmen who sought to assure the permanence of our rule in India, by developing her resources and contenting her people. Backwards or Forwards?—that is the question which results from this brief survey of the past history and present aspect of the North-West Frontier problem, towards the wise answering of which I trust my third and last tract may contribute something.

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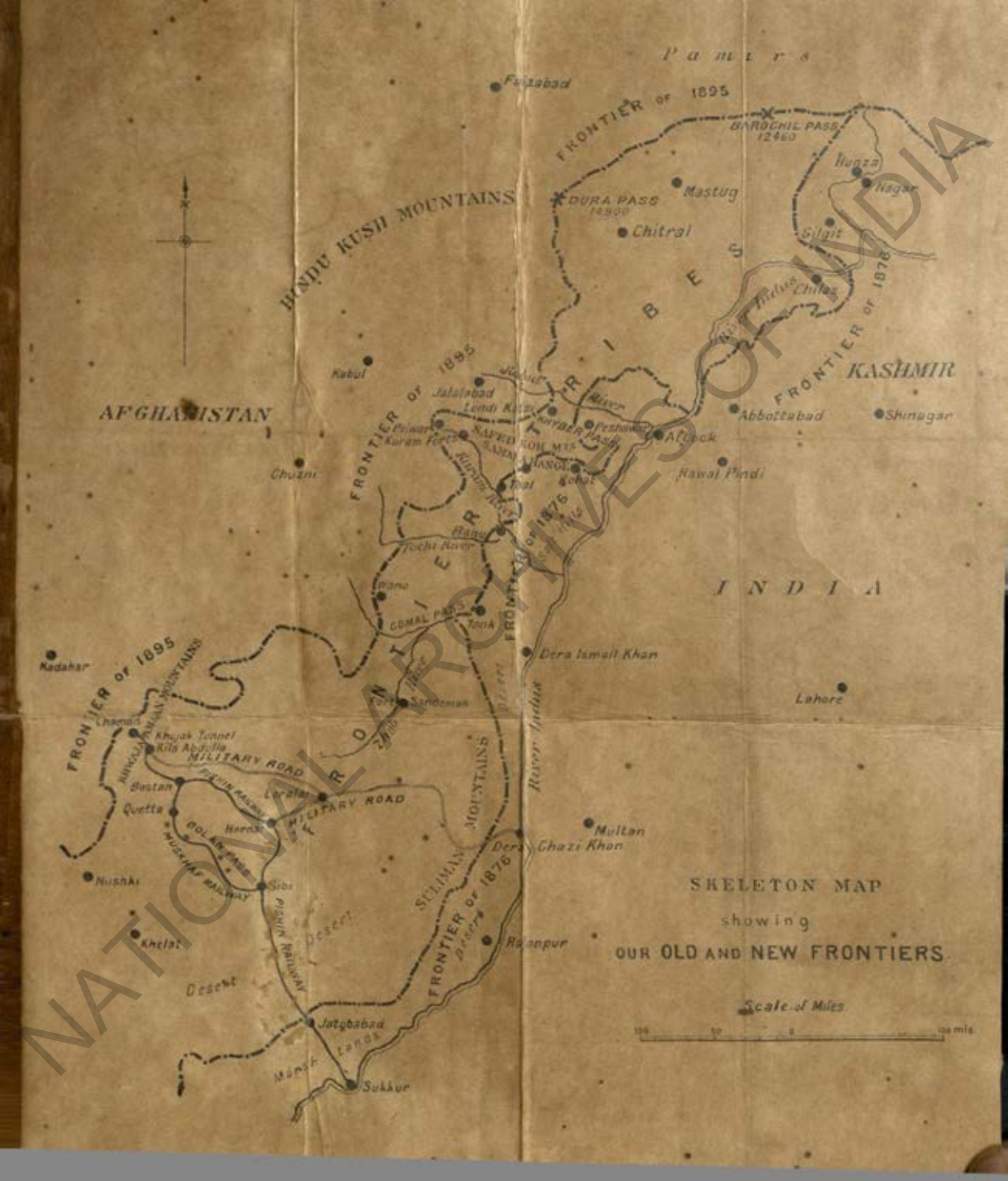

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